

Understanding the Socio-cultural systems of the rural communities in indigenous management of solid waste.

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Key words: socio-culture, indigenous, rural communities, society, solid waste.

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Abstract

Cultural system plays a vital role in indigenous management of solid waste. The aim of this study was to understand the socio-cultural systems of the rural communities in indigenous management of solid waste. The objective was to investigate how socio-cultural values affect environmental sustainability. The united communities could mean they have a sense of belonging and that they respect nature through their belief systems and indigenous practices. Research questions emanated from literature and the existing situation in the study area. Literature revealed gaps such as no literature on similar topic in the study area, lack of implementation of the existing laws and policies and the negative impact on the environment. Thus, an understanding of cultural and social systems was required looking at the adverse effects on the environment and seeking to identify the corrective measures. The research questions underpinning this study were formulated and explored to support the academic and intellectual debate on the research phenomenon. This was a mixed study of quantitative, qualitative, observations and focus groups methods of data collection. Data were collected from 20 rural communities in Maseru Lesotho, analysed quantitatively using SPSS version 28.0, raw data were compiled to transform it into significant and meaningful insight. Findings revealed that indigenous waste management systems could be attributed to cultural believes and values. Limitations for this study include lack of literature on the topic for study areas. There is potential for further research focusing on causal relationships between waste and the environment and this would inform policymakers in the study country on how to respond to rural planning in solid waste management and sustainable development.

Introduction

The continent of Africa has a diverse culture, and the rural areas habitants live a traditional culture embedded in myths, believes, stories, taboos and proverbs. An integral part of the African cultural system encompasses the conservation of environmental resources and the ecosystem (Elrashdi, 2021). The evolution of culture is a natural process that is rooted right from birth through parents, family, society and external environment. Collective customs, intelligence, faith, political governance, customs, lifestyle build the concept of culture. The success of cultural component of solid waste management development is centered around sound regulations, programmes and policies in a specified rural community (Kumar, 2009). A diverse culture in Africa is evident where some rural communities such as those in Nigeria use culture to indiscriminately dispose of their generated waste into the street claiming that the government is responsible for waste collection, so it does not concern them. Furthermore, it is a common practice to use pit latrines around their home to dispose of their generated waste (Yabuku, 2017). It is however noticed from literature that the rural communities have different cultural perceptions on indigenous management of solid waste. Their perception is split into three (1) Policy (2) Human rights and (3) Own way of living. For them, policy involves modern technology, exclusion from decision making and rural and urban borders. Human rights include right to land, right to natural resources and Sovereignty. The third one involves their own way of living. This notion underpins culture itself, norms, values, interest and believes (Senekane, Makhene & Oelofse, 2022).

Material and Methods

This study employed a quantitative descriptive method to cover various constituencies of rural communities in the study area. A qualitative ethnographic design was utilised to enable the researcher to gain acceptance from participants in the study while direct observation method was employed to connect with participants in their own environment and to ask questions relevant to cultural context. Four field workers were recruited and trained to administer questions and conduct interviews to participants. A two-day pilot study was conducted. Questions for a pilot study were same as those in the main study. Semi-structured questions were split into three of opinion, competency and experience verification and behavioural questions. Collected data was

analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. For quantitative analysis, data was validated, edited and coded to transform it into significant and understandable information. A thematic analysis method was used to analyse data qualitatively.

Results and discussion

The results of this study are presented using a 5-point Lickert scale. The focus are socio-cultural beliefs, socio-cultural values, disposal of waste on the ground, natural resources, socio-cultural mores, customs, rituals and tradition, habit, utility in behaviour, utility and socio-cultural system, knowledge dissemination to fit the system of values. They are presented in two categories of perception on understanding indigenous systems of solid waste management and socio-cultural systems in the rural communities. The highest and lowest values are presented. Participants in this study were 464. Majority (32.3%) strongly agreed that indigenous systems of managing waste was associated to socio-cultural beliefs while 8.4% strongly disagreed. In terms of socio-cultural values, 32.4% strongly agreed and 8.4% strongly disagreed. For waste disposal on the ground, 5.4% strongly agreed and 75.4% strongly disagreed. For natural resources, 33.7% strongly agreed and 23.9% disagreed. For socio-cultural mores, 25.2% strongly agreed and 20.3% strongly disagreed. For customs, rituals and traditions, 55.5% strongly agreed and 1.1% strongly disagreed. For habit, 62.6% strongly agreed and 1.9% disagreed. For utility in behaviour, 40.0% strongly agreed and 4.8% strongly disagreed. For utility and socio-cultural system, 30.7% strongly agreed and 6.0% strongly disagreed. For knowledge dissemination to fit the system of values, 65.0% strongly agreed and 16.0% strongly disagreed.

Collectiveness that brings the rural communities together is weak and this may lead to adverse effects on how individuals manage their waste. Socio-cultural values have focussed on personal values and have failed to consider value dimensions within a broader framework of the community. Consequently, there is no relationship between the values and behaviour of individual members of the rural communities. Communities understand that culture does not support the disposal of waste on the ground. For some community members, culture may be disappearing, and it is reasonable to encourage communities not to ignore their cultural beliefs. Not everyone lived in proximity to natural resources. There were natural resources of their ancestral territories, but they were somehow exploited. Communities were not bonding with their natural, or they had limited natural resources that were accessible to a certain portion of community members. Majority of communities members still followed the footsteps of their ancestors when it came to waste management. A habit in terms of indigenous waste management is carried out because of a lack of pressure from the community to manage waste properly. Majority repeatedly engaged in ISPs of SWM, and this habit is centered around their traditional and customary practices. Rural communities may not have basic utilities because of their geographical location, which may be attributed to a lack of planning. There is no sharing of values in the rural communities.

Conclusion

The communities in the rural areas are driven by individualistic cultural values and tend to stand out of the group. Cultural beliefs may contribute positively to alleviating indiscriminate waste disposal problems. There is a need to enhance environmental sustainability through interdisciplinary approaches such as cultural constructs. It is important to illustrate effective systems and practices of SWM through human interconnectedness, the environment, and sustainable development. Most communities understand their culture; thus, they continue observing their rituals. Education, law enforcement and community concern can help promote the proper management of waste using ISPs. There is a need to empower the communities and engage them in SWM projects that will support their understanding of being indigenous. Educators will need to work very hard to bring members of the community together so that they talk about indigenous systems and values.

References

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